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## GENERAL NOTES.

GEOGRAPHY AND TRAVELS.<sup>1</sup>

AMERICA.—*American News*.—Col. Fontana, Governor of Chubut (the northern part of Patagonia), has followed the River Chubut to its sources in the Andes, about 42° S. lat., and has thence crossed prairie and forest to the 46th parallel. He found three passes into Chili, laid down accurately the courses of several rivers, found the source of the Senger (an affluent of the Chubut), verified the positions of Lakes Colne and Musters, and determined the positions of the spots at which the Senger and Chico debouch into the lake.—The June issue of the Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society contains a sketch of the physical geography of Brazil, by James W. Wells, accompanied by a map showing the forest, grass, and arid regions of the country. The account agrees in the main with that given by Mr. Orville Derby, in the AMERICAN NATURALIST, not long ago, but contains many interesting details about the present state of the population, the railways which, diverging from Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Bahia and Pernambuco, are linking the interior to the coast, and other matters.—A tolerably full account of the superficies, soil, climate, people, commerce and industries of Venezuela, by M. P. Druyckler, may be found in the Bulletin of the Antwerp Royal Geographical Society, 1886, 5th fascicule.—Guatemala had, on January 1st, 1886, a population of 1,322,544, showing an increase of 37,940 over that of the first day of 1885, or nearly three per cent per annum. The births in 1885 were 63,687, the deaths 25,747.

ASIA.—*Persia*.—Mr. J. A. Rees describes, in notes published last year at Madras, a journey from Kasvin to Hamadan, west of Teheran. The country between these points is much more fertile and thickly populated than has been generally supposed. Away up to the Elburz range extend fertile and well-watered plains, covered with corn (grain), vineyards and orchards, while the hills give a fair return of wheat without irrigation. Mr. Rees believes that the population of Persia is much under-estimated. Persian notions about Francistan and Inglestan, the division of Farangistan, and of the country of the "Ooroos" (Russia) are rather amusing.

*Exploration on the Lena*.—Dr. Bunge and Baron von Toll, who are charged by the Russian Geographical Society with the exploration of the New Siberian islands, explored last year the whole region of the Yana with its mountains, obtaining rich palæontological collections, four hundred kinds of plants, and a large number of insects, mollusks, etc. Six examples of *Ovis borealis* were taken on the mountains on the right bank of the Lena. According to information received September 5, 1885,

<sup>1</sup> This department is edited by W. N. LOCKINGTON, Philadelphia.

Dr. Bunge was preparing to visit the New Siberian Island of Koteling this spring.

*The Turki Tongues.*—Mr. Morison, of Tiflis, has contributed to the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society a summary of the distribution of the Turki languages. Turki proper is spoken by the Turks of the Ottoman empire, in the Russian governments of Nijni Novgorod, Kasan, Simbirsk, Viatka and Orenburg; in Trans-Caucasia and in N. W. Persia. The Nogai branch is used in Bessarabia, the Crimea, Cis-Caucasia, the Volga delta, North-east Daghestan, the Terek valley, the N. W. shore of the Caspian, Kasan, Simbirsk, Orenburg and Ufa; the Uigar branch in Yarkhand and Chinese Tartary, the Tekke country, the Zarafshan valley, Khiva and Kuldja; the Kirghiz from the Volga to the confines of Manchuria, especially in S. W. Siberia; and the Yakut in N. E. Siberia and the northern slopes of Mount Sayan. Thus the Ugro-Altaiic tongues extend over  $100^{\circ}$  of longitude and  $35^{\circ}$  of latitude, and Turki alone is the language of twenty millions of people.

*Asiatic News.*—Baron Miklukho Maclay has returned to Odessa from a two years' stay in New Guinea. He has a large collection. —A mission, armed with letters granted from Peking, is probably now on its way from Darjceling to Lhasa. It is under the charge of Mr. C. Macaulay, with Dr. Oldham for geologist, and Dr. Cunningham for naturalist. The only Englishman who has hitherto visited Lhasa is Thomas Manning, and much may be expected from an expedition along so unknown a route.—Mr. A. Hosie (Proc. Roy. Geog. Soc.) gives an account of a journey in Southwestern China, from Ssü-ch'uan to Western Yunnan. Ssü-ch'uan is the most important of the western provinces of China, contains thirty millions of inhabitants, and is a manufacturing province, exporting largely to its neighbors.—Mr. G. Taylor continues in the *China Review* his remarks upon the Formosa natives. Dealing only with a small section of the south, he has yet described six or seven tribes widely differing from each other. Some of these look down upon others as strangers and new-comers, though the Chinese have supposed all to be aborigines. The Amias, who are said to have been brought by shipwreck, worship one Supreme Being, and believe in a future state dependent on conduct in this life. Among the Tipuns, when a man marries, he enters his wife's family, while among the Paiwans the reverse is the case. The Tipuns have a tradition that they came from some other country.

AFRICA.—*The Congo.*—The point at which the French possessions and the Congo Free State meet upon the Congo has been fixed at the intersection of the river with the parallel of  $6^{\circ} 20'$  S. lat., 400 meters from the village of Pombo, and on the right bank of the Ubangi. The line from thence to the coast has not been

explored. The four commissioners ascended the Ubangi, which seemed to start in the right direction, but found that it turned northward. The Ubangi and Licon-Nbunga are two perfectly distinct streams, instead of forming a common delta, as has been before stated.

*The Island of Diego Garcîa.*—Gilbert C. Bourne describes in the June issue of the Proc. Royal Geographical Society the coral atoll of Diego Garcîa, belonging to the Chagos group. There are four openings into the lagoon, one of which affords a passage six to eight fathoms deep. The lagoon has an average depth of eleven fathoms, and forms a good harbor. The strip of land varies from about twenty yards to a mile in width, and is densely covered with cocoanut palms, *Scævola kænigii* and *Tournefortia argentea*. The interior parts of the main island have a black peaty mould, formed by the decayed leaves of the cocoa-palms. Here grow *Guetturda speciosa*, or "bois de feu;" and *Cordia subcordata*, or "bois malgache." A Casuarina grows on the east side of the island, and *Hernandia peltata* and *H. ovigera* (bois blanc), as well as *Pisonia inermis*, also occur. The gaiac (*Afzelia bijuga*) forms a single group in the northeast. The staple produce is cocoanut oil, and the island is in the hands of a company at Mauritius. The only wild animals are introduced rats; fifteen species of birds occur, only one a land bird; the Mauritian gecko (*Platydactylus mauritanicus*) is common, and there is a mud tortoise in some of the marshy pools. The insect fauna is poor in species, but rich in individuals, and includes flies, mosquitoes, cockroaches and ants. Coleoptera are scarce. Three species of Gecarcinus are common, and effectually put a stop to all efforts to grow garden vegetables. Mr. Bourne settles the controversy concerning the tree-climbing habits of *Birgus latro* by declaring that he has seen it do so. It eats the nuts that are on the ground, but ascends the palms for shade and protection.

*African News.*—Dr. Fischer has just recovered from fever contracted at Kagehi, on the southern shore of Lake Victoria, Nyanza. He was not able to reach Unyoro through Uganda on account of the threatening attitude of the Kabakas, the murderers of Bishop Harrington. He will attempt to reach Unyoro by making a detour of Uganda, but is not sanguine.—The engineer of the Suez canal has informed Gen. J. T. Walker that (1) the annual mean level of the Mediterranean at Port Said is the same as that of the Red sea at Suez, and (2) according to the observations of the Panama Canal Company there is no difference of moment between the levels of the Atlantic at Colon and of the Pacific at Panama.—The trunk left at Brussels by Maurizio Buönfanti, who claimed to have made a journey across Africa, from the Mediterranean to the Niger and Gulf of Guinea, has been examined. The trunk contained letters, romances, come-

dies, cuttings from newspapers, but nothing about the journey. —King Menelik of Shoa has, through the influence of Count Antonelli, prohibited traffic in slaves, and in consequence of this ill-feeling has arisen between him and the neighboring Sultan Anhari, of Haussa. —A tribe of Danakils recently fell upon and killed two Frenchmen and their Abyssinian escort, also the brother of the sultan of the region. —Herr B. Schwartz has succeeded in penetrating the region behind the Cameroon mountains, which Rogorinski was prevented from reaching by the jealousy of a native tribe. The River Kumba, an affluent of the Mango, was crossed, the territory of Bafu, a great slave mart and the home of the Ba-Farani, was reached, and the upper course of the Calabar almost gained after passing the popular cities of Kumba and Kimendi, when an attack by five hundred armed Ba Farani slaves compelled the traveler to retreat. —Full particulars of the massacre of the Italian expedition under Count Porro are contained in a recent number of the *Bolletino della Società Geographica de Italia*. It appears that the Emir of Harrar has suddenly been fired with fanaticism, which prompts him to expel all Christian traders. On April 25 he attacked the British post of Gialdessa, took captive the Arab and Somali garrison and the escort of the Italians, and killed all the Italians of the expedition.

#### GEOLOGY AND PALÆONTOLOGY.

WALCOTT ON THE CAMBRIAN OF NORTH AMERICA.—Mr. Walcott has contributed to the August issue of the *American Journal of Science* an able essay upon the Cambrian system. He regards the Potsdam of New York and the Mississippi valley, with *Dicelloccephalus*, as Upper Cambrian; while the Cambrian of Newfoundland and Braintree, Mass., with *Paradoxides*, he places in the Lower Cambrian. This conclusion is reached by a study of the exposures of Cambrian strata in the Colorado and Wasatch regions. The entire Upper Cambrian is absent from the Wasatch mountains, the Silurian resting unconformably on strata of Middle Cambrian age. Between the Silurian and the granite below lie 12,000 feet of siliceous shales, quartzites and sandstones. The upper 250 feet of silico-argillaceous shales contain *Cruziana*? *Lingulella ella*, *Kutorgina pannula*, *Hyolithes billingsi*, *Leperditia argenta*, *Olenellus gilberti*, *Ptychoparia quadrans* and *Bathyriscus producta*, all of which occur at the same horizon in several localities in Nevada. The Lower beds contain no fossils. In the Eureka district (Nev.), the lower 1500 feet of quartzites corresponds to the upper half of the 3000 feet of quartzite in the Wasatch, and the *Olenellus* shales occur at the summit of the quartzite. But between these shales and the Silurian lie over 6000 feet of limestone with a fauna uniting the Middle Cambrian with the